consumer news

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Esther Peterson, Director

Vol. 9, No. 1, Jan. 1, 1979

International Year of the Child, 1979

In a 1976 resolution the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1979 as a year for all children and urged governments "to expand their efforts at the national and community levels to provide lasting improvements in the well-being of their children—with special attention to those in the most vulnerable and, particularly, disadvantaged groups." Each country has been given the challenge to look at the existing needs of their children and to determine what can be done to meet those needs.

As a result of the UN's resolution, the President issued an Executive Order establishing a **National Commission on the International Year of the Child** (IYC) to provide for the observance of IYC in the US. Among other committees serving under the National Commission is the IYC Interagency Committee which is composed of government agency representatives, including the **US Office of Consumer Affairs** (OCA). This committee has been focusing attention on consumer programs that directly or indirectly affect children.

As Esther Peterson, Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, pointed out, "Our children are our most vulnerable consumers, and although much remains to be done, our government has taken bold steps to protect our children from such obvious hazards as easily-opened medicine bottles and caustic cleaning products, dangerous cribs, and flammable nightgowns. In addition, the **Federal Trade Commission** is considering regulations that would ban TV advertising directed to children too young to understand its selling purpose (with special emphasis on advertising of highly sugared products) and the **Federal Communications Commission** is looking at children's TV and program practices in general. You will be hearing more about these and other issues during the IYC."

If you would like to learn more about IYC, write or call the National Commission on the International Year of the Child, 1979, 726 Jackson Place, NW, Washington, DC 20506; telephone 202-456-6672.

S-p-r-e-a-d-i-n-g the word

Consumer Federation of America (CFA) will hold its annual Consumer Assembly '79 Feb. 7, 8 and 9 at the Capitol Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC. For information write or call Consumer Federation of America, Suite 901, 1012 14th St., NW, Washington, DC 20005; telephone 202-737-3732.

The President and COIN

President Carter, his top inflation fighter Alfred Kahn, and his consumer advisor Esther Peterson met on Dec. 19 with representatives of the COIN campaign (Consumers Opposed to Inflation in the Necessities) to begin an ongoing dialogue designed to bring about policies that will reduce costs of the "basic necessities of life."

The COIN campaign, which began last fall, was organized by a group of 10 consumer, labor, citizen, environmental, and senior citizen organizations for the purpose of obtaining public policies aimed at controlling inflation for the goods and services consumers need most—food, housing, health care, and energy. After the meeting, President Carter stated, "Following our very constructive meeting with COIN I have asked Alfred Kahn to have the working groups he has assembled to cooperate with COIN and other consumer groups to plan additional specific steps to hold down inflation in the sectors of the economy that provide the basic necessities of life. I expect their recommendations soon.

"Consumers always seem to be the last to be consulted about the policies that determine what they pay for products and services in the marketplace. COIN has spoken up for consumers throughout this nation effectively, and I want to hear their views before decisions are made. I want COIN to be a partner in our common effort to control inflation."

Statistics show that these 4 sectors (food, housing, health care, and energy) comprise 70% of the spending for 80% of all Americans. According to the Consumer Price Index, prices in these sectors are rising about twice as fast as all other areas. That is why COIN is seeking specific policies to curtail the rising costs of the most needed consumer commodities.

The Carter Administration is committed to taking specific steps to bring inflation under control in the cost of these basic necessities. For example, in the health care area, hospital cost containment legislation is being proposed to curtail rising hospital costs which have jumped 1000% since 1950. Similarly, deregulation of the trucking and railroad industries is being proposed, and, if passed, could reduce the cost of many goods from food to machinery, as well as conserve fuel.

President Carter and Mr. Kahn will be giving careful consideration to COIN's recommendations in the health, food, energy, transportation and housing sectors, and they welcome the specific anti-inflation suggestions of all consumers and their organizations. Send your suggestions to Esther Peterson, The White House, Washington, DC 20500. If you wish to get in touch with COIN write that organization at 2000 P St. NW, Suite 413, Washington, DC 20036.

In the meantime, you may not have seen the **US Office of Consumer Affairs'** (OCA) suggestions for coping with inflation in the 4 sectors mentioned above. *A Consumer's Shopping List of Inflation Fighting Ideas* is still available without charge from the Consumer Information Center, Dept. 625G, Pueblo, CO 81009. Free bulk copies may be obtained from the US Office of Consumer Affairs, 621 Reporters Bldg., Washington, DC 20201; telephone 202-755-8810.

Consumer News index: Vol. 8, part 2: July 1, 1978–Dec. 15, 1978

Below is an index to CONSUMER NEWS and its supplement CONSUMER REGISTER for the issues published July 1, 1978 through Dec. 15, 1978.

Date and page of the newsletter are given after each subject. "Down-filled products Aug 15:2" means an item about down-filled products appeared on page 2 of the Aug. 15, 1978 issue of CONSUMER NEWS. Subjects that appeared in CONSUMER REGISTER are designated by "CR" before date and page number. "CR Dec 1:1" means page 1 of the Dec. 1, 1978 issue of CONSUMER REGISTER.

Recalls, laws and publications are listed only once—under main entries for "recalls," "laws" and "publications."

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US Customs Service (part of the **Treasury Dept.**) has raised the limits on duty-free purchases from $100 to $300. As of Nov. 2, every household member traveling with you is allowed $300 worth of duty-free purchases. On the next $600 worth of purchases, the tax is a flat 10%. After $900, you start paying duty which varies according to the type of goods you bought. The duty-free limit on gifts bought in foreign countries and shipped home rose from $10 to $25.

For purchases made in American Samoa, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands, the exemption has risen from $200 to $600. On the next $600 worth you pay a 5% tax. US residents may also include any goods bought and sent home from these islands in their $600 personal exemption. This is called the "to-follow" privilege and only applies to US island possessions. (For information on qualifying for this privilege contact the US Customs Service at the address given below.) For gift packages sent from these islands, the duty-free limit doubled to $40 on Oct. 3.

Details—*Federal Register:* Oct. 25, page 49784. For further information write or call Harry Carnes, Inspection and Control Division, 1301 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229; telephone 202-566-5607.

New Federal publication

• *Investing in Oil, Gas and Coal* offers consumers and others advice on avoiding bad investments in those ventures. Free single copies are available from Securities and Exchange Commission, Public Affairs, 500 N. Capitol St., Washington, DC 20549.

CONSUMER NEWS is published the 1st and 15th of each month by the US Office of Consumer Affairs to report Federal Government programs for consumers. Use of funds for printing this publication through Sept. 30, 1979, approved by Office of Management and Budget. Authorization to reproduce any or all items is granted. Editorial address is CONSUMER NEWS, US Office of Consumer Affairs, 621 Reporters Bldg., Washington, DC 20201; Howard Seltzer, Acting Director of Public Affairs (202) 755-8810; Marion Q. Ciaccio, Managing Editor (202) 755-8830. Sold by Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009; subscription $6 a year, payable to "Supt. of Documents." Send address change to Supt. of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1979 260-929/8
DHEW PUBLICATION NO. (OS) 79-106

UNITED STATES
OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

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